

❖ Other Voices ❖

We need not look for scapegoats.... Some Christians have taken on the abortion issue; others have focused on divorce, the gay rights movement, illegitimacy, you name it. While Christians must continue to make their moral witness clear and live according to biblical standards, it is important not to confuse symptoms with causes. The deinstitutionalization of marriage is a cultural phenomenon rooted in some forces that cannot be reversed, some that should not be reversed, and others that can and should be reversed.... We can do several things, however. We can clarify a Christian understanding of marriage and divorce and live accordingly. We can strengthen faith communities so that they no longer capitulate to destructive cultural trends. And we can bear witness to the culture. Through our lives and through our words, we can call our neighbors to a better way.

DAVID P. GUSHEE, *Getting Marriage Right* (2004)

For the sake of our own identity, as well as our witness to our society, we need a full and serious recovery of the depth and breadth of our moral and theological resources in Scripture and tradition. This includes a notion of Christian marriage as a distinctive theological vocation based in discipleship, a call to embody in our faithfulness and forgiveness toward one another, in our patient nurturing and bearing with one another, the endless forbearance shown us by God in Christ. Only such a full-blown call to fidelity and permanence in marriage can offer something beyond the practical calculation of generic social functionality, the claim that *in general* it is better for children and for society if married partners remain together.

SONDRA WHEELER, "Christians and Family," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics* (2005)

Many Christians lack a clear sense of why they are married and raising families as church members. Indeed, in so far as contemporary Christians even try to explain a social purpose for marriage they tend to do so primarily in sociological or secular political terms. They have lost sight of the significance of Christian marriage and family as a form of human community in service to the Church and the Kingdom of God.

VIGEN GURDIAN, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (1987)

Firmly established by the Lord, the unity of marriage will radiate from the equal personal dignity of wife and husband, a dignity acknowledged by

mutual and total love. The constant fulfillment of the duties of this Christian vocation demands notable virtue. For this reason, strengthened by grace for holiness of life, the couple will painstakingly cultivate and pray for steadiness of love, largeheartedness, and the spirit of sacrifice.

***Gaudium et Spes* (1965)**

Religiously committed people who, by reason of their worldview, wish to make a case for the normativity of the two-parent family would be well advised to spend less time claiming the high moral ground for their position, and more time showing by example that they are committed to egalitarian gender relations between spouses, to a radical degendering of both public and private spheres of life, and to the development of institutions supportive of childrearing that promote both female achievement and male nurturance.

MARY STEWART VAN LEEUWEN, "Re-Inventing the Ties That Bind," in *Religion, Feminism, and the Family* (1996)

The death of unconstrained patriarchy, the end of the status of wives and children as chattel, and the prohibition of child labor hardly signal that family life in the twenty-first-century America is now morally safe.... American culture offers a full range of corruptions, shaped by its distinctive features of consumer capitalism and technological self-confidence. Marriage is now explicitly a life-style choice, and economic strategy, and courtship is more and more overtly conducted in a marketplace complete with advertising, both veiled and direct.

SONDRA WHEELER, "Christians and Family," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics* (2005)

As an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love.

Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person, in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is in its proper form an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being "created in the image of God."

JOHN PAUL II (1920-2005), *Familiaris Consortio* (1981)

The community of the church must seek to find ways to provide deep and satisfying *koinōnia* and friendships to those divorced persons who choose not to remarry in order to devote their lives to the service of God outside the married state.... In other words, within the church we need to shatter the power of the myth that only married people are normal and that only marriage offers the conditions necessary for human fulfillment.

RICHARD B. HAYS, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (1996)